

Message Text

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AMCONSUL ADANA

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AMCONSUL IZMIR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANKARA 0251

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT TU

SUBJECT: MAJOR PARTIES' OUTLOOKS ENTERING ELECTION YEAR

1. RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH SEVERAL TOP-ECHELON OFFICIALS OF TURKEY'S TWO LARGEST PARTIES, DEPCHAIRMAN CEVHERI AND SEN CEVDET AYKAN OF THE JUSTICE PARTY (JP) AND DEPSECGEN USTUNDAG AND SEN UGUR ALACAKAPTAN OF THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP), HAVE BROUGHT OUT THESE FREATURES OF THE PARTIES' OUTLOOKS AS THEY ENTER AN ELECTION YEAR:

A. ELECTION OUTCOME:

(1) THE RPP OFFICIALS: THE RPP (WHICH
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CHARACTERISTICALLY IS OPTIMISTIC) EXPECTS TO WIN A MINIMUM OF 224 OF THE 450 SEATS IN THE LOWER HOUSE, WHILE A "MODERATE EXPECTATION" WOULD BE 235-240.

(2) JP OFFICIALS: THE JP EXPECTS TO WIN ONLY AROUND 200 SEATS, GIVE OR TAKE A FEW. (HOWEVER, AYKAN EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL BELIEF THAT, IF THE PARTY WERE ABLE TO

OVERCOME ITS INTERNAL STRUGGLES AND PULL TOGETHER, IT COULD GET AS MUCH AS 40 TO 45 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTE. GIVEN TURKEY'S PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM, THAT PERCENTAGE MIGHT TRANSLATE INTO A MAJORITY OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS.)

B. GOVERNMENT STABILITY:

(1) RPP OFFICIALS: DEMIREL SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM POWER WELL BEFORE THE ELECTIONS. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS A VERY GOOD CHANCE THAT THE DEMIREL COALITION WILL BREAK UP IN MARCH, AFTER PARLIAMENT HAS MET ITS CONSTITUTIONALLY-IMPOSED DEADLINE OF FEB 28 FOR PASSAGE OF THE BUDGET. THE RPP HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ERBAKAN'S NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP), THE SECOND LARGEST COALITION MEMBER, REGARDING THE FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT. ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE A COALITION LED BY THE RPP; ANOTHER WOULD BE A MINORITY COALITION, PROBABLY FORMED OF THE NSP AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, WITH THE RPP SUPPORTING BUT NOT PARTICIPATING (ERBAKAN WAS SAID TO UNDERSTAND THAT HE COULD NOT BE THE PRIME MINISTER IN SUCH A GOVERNMENT).

(2) JP OFFICIALS: THE JP'S CHANCES IN THE ELECTIONS WILL BE ENHANCED BY STAYING IN POWER UNTIL THE VOTE. THE SELF-INTEREST OF ALL THE COALITION PARTNERS IN PRESERVING THE GOVT IS STILL STRONG, AND THE COALITION WILL SURVIVE UNTIL THE ELECTION PERIOD. (RECENTLY, DEMIREL WAS QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS WARNING THAT NO GOVERNMENT THAT COULD BE FORMED FROM THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT COULD LAST THREE MONTHS UNLESS IT INCLUDED THE JP.)

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C. EARLY ELECTIONS:

(1) RPP OFFICIALS: THE RPP HAS NO DESIRE AT PRESENT FOR EARLY ELECTIONS AND EXPECTS THAT THEY WILL BE HELD IN OCTOBER, I.E., FOUR YEARS AFTER THE LAST ELECTIONS AS THE CONSTITUTION PRESCRIBES.

(2) JP OFFICIALS: THE JP WOULD PREFER TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN JUNE BUT DOUBTS THAT A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY IN FAVOR OF EARLY ELECTIONS COULD BE ARRANGED.

D. CAMPAIGN ISSUES:

(1) RPP OFFICIALS: THE ECONOMY WILL PROVIDE THE MAJOR ISSUES OF THE CAMPAIGN, FOLLOWED BY THE PROBLEM OF DOMESTIC SECURITY. THE GOVT'S FAILURES TO SETTLE INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS WILL TAKE A DISTANT THIRD PLACE (UNLESS EVENTS PRODUCE A HOT INTERNATIONAL ISSUE).

(2) JP OFFICIALS: THE JP IS JUST STARTING TO
PREPARE THE PROGRAM ON WHICH ITS CAMPAIGN WILL BE BASED.
THE KEY TO SUCCESS IS NOT SO MUCH THE ISSUES AS GOOD
ORGANIZATIONAL WORK AND GRASS-ROOTS CAMPAIGNING.

E. ORGANIZATION: ALTHOUGH THEIR SPOKESMAN DISCLAIM
IT, BOTH PARTIES ARE PLAGUED BY INTERNAL DIVISIONS. IN THE
RPP, THE DENIZ BAYKAL FACTION REMAINS DISCONTENTED; WHILE
IN THE JP, THERE IS TENSION BETWEEN THE MENDERES-ERA "OLD
DEMOCRATS" AND SOME OF THE NEWER POLITICIANS, AND BETWEEN
DEMIREL AND HIS RIVALS WITHIN THE PARTY.

F. PERCEPTIONS OF OWN STRENGTH:

(1) RPP OFFICIALS: ECEVIT IS A STRONG VOTE GETTER
WHO CAN MAKE THE MOST FROM WHAT THE RPP SEES AS GROWING
PUBLIC DISSATISFACTION WITH DEMIREL. IN ADDITION, THE RPP IS
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FAVORED BY TWO SOCIAL TRENDS, URBANIZATION AND MODERNIZATION.

(2) JP OFFICIALS: THE JP AND ITS PREDECESSOR,
MENDERES' DEMOCRAT PARTY, HAVE GOVERNED TURKEY FOR MOST
OF THE LAST 26 YEARS, WHICH SHOWS THAT THE PARTY HAS A STRONG
POLITICAL GRIP ON THE VOTERS AND A TRIED-AND-TRUE APPROACH.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ANKARA 0251

THE PARTY'S POOR SHOWING IN THE 1973 ELECTIONS IS ASCRIBABLE TO THE EFFECTS OF THE 1971 MILITARY INTERVENTION AGAINST DEMIREL. THOSE EFFECTS HAVE BEEN MULLIFIED BY DEMIREL'S SUCCESS IN KEEPING HIS COALITION GOVT IN POWER SINCE APRIL 1975.

G. ATTITUDES TOWARD EACH OTHER: THE TWO PARTIES CONTINUE TO REGARD EACH OTHER WITH SUSPICION AND HOSTILITY. THIS ATTITUDE IS LIKELY TO BE FUTHER REENFORCED BY THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

2. COMMENT: OUR OBSERVATIONS AT THIS EARLY STAGE ARE NECESSARILY LIMITED. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD STRESS THESE POINTS:

A. CAMPAIGNING HAS ALREADY BEGUN AND WILL BE INTENSIFYING IN THE MONTHS JUST AHEAD. TIME IS RUNNING OUT
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FOR GETTING THE DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT RATIFIED BY THE TURKISH PARLIAMENT WITHOUT THE DECISION'S BECOMING EMBROILED IN CAMPAIGNING. AN ADDITIONAL HAZARD TO THE DCA'S RATIFICATION IS THE POSSIBLE FALL OF THE GOVT THAT NEGOTIATED THE AGREEMENT. WHILE AT THIS POINT THERE ARE NOT RPT NO DEFINITE INDICATIONS THAT THE GOVT WILL FALL IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, THE LIFE EXPECTANCY OF THIS FRAGILE COALITION HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY UNCERTAIN.

B. THERE IS AS YET NOT RPT NO BASIS FOR EXPECTING THAT EITHER OF THE MAJOR PARTIES WILL WIN A MAJORITY OF SEATS SO THAT IT CAN THEN FORM A GOVT WITHOUT A COALITION. THE TWO PARTIES' BASIC ESTIMATES OF THE OUTCOME STAND TO BE ALTERED CONSIDERABLY BY THE EVENTS AND THE CAMPAIGNING BETWEEN NOW AND THE ELECTIONS. IN THE MOST RECENT PREVIOUS TEST, THE 1975 ELECTION TO RENEW ONE-THIRD OF THE SENATE, NEITHER MAJOR PARTY WON A MAJORITY, AND THE FINISH WAS VERY CLOSE: 43.37 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL VOTES FOR THE RPP, 40.81 PERCENT FOR THE JP. HOWEVER, THE SENATE ELECTION WAS BY ITS NATURE NOT A FAIR TEST OF THE SMALLER PARTIES; AN
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IT IS WIDELY EXPECTED (1) THAT THE NATIONAL SALVATION APTRY (NSP) COLD DO AT LEAST AS WELL THIS YEAR AS IN 1973, WHEN IT WON 48 SEATS, AND (2) THAT THE NSP COULD AGAIN HOLD THE KEY TO A COALITION.

C. THE DIFFICULTY OF THE GOVT'S DECISION-MAKING ON

SENSITIVE ISSUES SUCH AS CYPRUS IS LIKELY TO BE INTENSIFIED BY
THE PRESSURES OF CAMPAIGNING AND THE INTER-PARTY MANEUVERING
OVER BRINGING DOWN THE GOVT AND SETTING EARLY ELECTION DATES.
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